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October 8, 2012

Gary Chartrand, Chair
Sally Bradshaw
A.K. Desai
Barbara S. Feingold
John R. Padget
Kathleen Shanahan
Pam Stewart, Commissioner

**RE: PROVIDING STUDENTS THE BEST EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS;
ELIMINATE TEXTBOOK ADOPTION**

Dear Chair Chartrand, Fellow Board Members and Commissioner Stewart:

I am writing to request that the Board of Education (BoE) add to the list of our 2013 Legislative Priorities the elimination of textbook adoption and mandating textbooks.

These changes would get rid of the expensive and unnecessary burdens that impede the ability of our teachers and students from accessing the latest, most advanced, and best educational materials, many of which are, or will become, available through the use of digital learning. This is the one remaining major area that needs to be reformed and transformed to enhance student achievement. It is time our students are provided the best educational materials.

Florida's system of education currently has rigorous standards, rigorous assessments, the best accountability system in the nation, and a new rigorous teacher evaluation law. All of these components of our system serve to ensure outcomes: that our students learn our state mandated standards at high levels of achievement. With these controls of the outcomes should come the freedom for our principals, teachers, and school districts to achieve those outcomes in the ways they think best based upon the exercise of their professional judgment.

Our objective at this stage of the development of our system of education should be to give our students the best educational materials regardless of the author, source, and location, found anywhere in the world, so long as the students learn what is required by our standards. To achieve that objective we should create an educational environment at our schools that will energize and allow our principals and teachers to innovate to use whatever

materials they deem appropriate in the exercise of their professional judgment in order to achieve the outcomes mandated by the BoE. This environment will foster and advance the use of the latest and best instructional materials, whether those materials are obtained through the use of digital learning or otherwise.

These changes will result in numerous educational and financial benefits, such as:

Educational Benefits

- Flexibility
- Allowing districts to use a variety of sources for materials as opposed to adopting and purchasing one title
- Narrowing the gap between what technology allows us to do and how we educate our children
- Supporting multi-media and interactivity promoting increased student engagement
- Allowing districts to provide materials that are more personalized and customized for the needs of the students
- Allowing districts to purchase content as needed
- Accommodating special learning needs
- Improving the tracking of how and when materials are used
- Facilitating teacher and student feedback on materials
- Allowing materials to be updated as and when appropriate
- Allowing materials to be available anytime and anywhere
- Allowing students to annotate without damaging materials
- Lightening the backpacks carried by our children

Financial Benefits

- Reducing unnecessary and costly paperwork, rules, and regulations
- Allowing materials to be purchased as needed and not on a cycle
- Allowing districts to take greater advantage of free and open source materials
- Eliminating the need to provide both print and digital versions of textbooks
- Allowing for cost savings over time

In order to achieve these benefits, the Department of Education (DoE) working with the districts will need to develop an effective transition plan that addresses the following, among other, matters:

- Identifying and providing sustainable funding or a funding mechanism or cost effective student devices which can also be used for testing and online classes

- Transitioning to an online testing system that would allow students to use personal devices
- Changing policies to allow school districts to use textbook funds to purchase student devices
- Providing robust and comprehensive internet connectivity at schools
- Providing teacher training and professional development for operating devices and accessing digital content
- Providing technical support

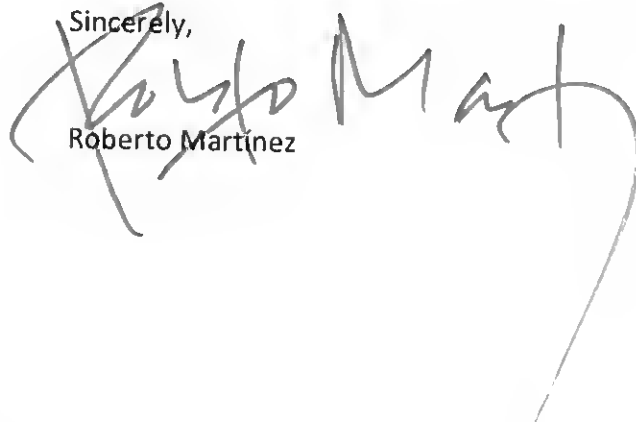
The DoE and the districts will need to identify the changes to our statutes, rules, and budgetary practices and funding needed to make the transition. They will also need to identify some of the unique issues Florida will need to address. For example, there may be some smaller or rural districts that will need additional support from the state due to a variety of reasons. Another challenge will be the accessibility for some students with disabilities. Although digital materials and learning tools can assist many students with disabilities and allow for a customized learning environment, digital learning may not be appropriate for all learners and accommodations will have to be provided. The DoE can also play a constructive role, as needed, to drive down the costs of purchasing content.

The decision as to what educational materials work best and should be used in a classroom to achieve the outcomes required by the BoE should be left to the persons most qualified to make that decision: the teachers and principals working with the superintendents at the district level.

Our students will be the winners brought about by these changes. They will be provided with the latest, most advanced, and best educational materials, and become better prepared to compete in a highly competitive 21st Century world economy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Roberto Martinez', is written over the printed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Roberto Martinez